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A Former Agent Looks at The CIA And the Craft of Intelligence

By John Marks

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In his 20-year career at the CIA, Ray Cline specialized in intelligence work—as opposed to covert operations. Intelligence simply means information, and the 1947 National Security Act set up the CIA as the central agency for the coordination and evaluation of all foreign information available anywhere in the United States government. The idea was to prevent another Pearl Harbor—a sneak attack that might have been blocked if secret data indicating Japanese war plans had not been bottled up in the military intelligence labyrinth.

Or at least, that was the idea as it was explained to Congress and the public. The insiders—including Cline—realized that another function of the new agency would be to cause events to happen around the world, with the help of secret money propaganda and violence. The 1947 law, however, made no mention of these now controversial covert action programs—which Cline thinks should not be seen as "dirty tricks" but as secret assistance to America's friends abroad.

Cline has written a partly autobiographical, partly descriptive history of the CIA called "Secrets, Spies and Scholars." Not surprisingly he deals mainly with the agency's intelligence function and minimizes the importance of covert operations. In his long government service, which stretched from the wartime OSS through the CIA to a tour as head of State Department intelligence, Cline played a major role in shaping the system by which our leaders receive estimates of what is going on in foreign places. He bemoans the low state to which the estimate process has fallen during the Kissinger era.

Cline believes, as do even the most vehement critics of the CIA, that the government should have the best possible information on such subjects as Soviet missile capabilities, Chinese nuclear testing, and world food problems. For four years he headed the CIA's Intelligence Directorate, which tries to make sense out of the mountains of raw data collected by the many government intelligence agencies. This kind of analytic work is similar to academic research—with the differences that the analysts have access to classified information and that their areas of study are guided by U.S. foreign policy interests.

In company with retired CIA scholars like Sherman Kent and Abbott Smith, Cline represents the tradition of intellectual honesty in intelligence. Unfortunately, as Cline points out, our policy-makers have often been unwilling to accept information that conflicted with their biases and, in the case of Henry Kissinger, have tried to control the flow of intelligence "to keep it from embarrassing the White House."

It is unusual for a CIA intelligence expert to move over to what the analysts call "the other side of the house," or the Clandestine Services. Ray Cline, however, was both intrigued by undercover work and ambitious to climb to the very top of an agency that has been dominated by covert op-

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